



**U.S. AGENCY FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT  
BUREAU FOR HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE (BHR)  
OFFICE OF U.S. FOREIGN DISASTER ASSISTANCE (OFDA)**

***AFGHANISTAN – Complex Emergency***

Information Bulletin #2, Fiscal Year (FY) 2001

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*Note: this Information Bulletin updates Information Bulletin #1, dated December 27, 2000.*

**Background**

Two decades of war in Afghanistan, including a decade-long Soviet occupation and ensuing civil strife, have left Afghanistan impoverished and mired in an extended humanitarian crisis. Government infrastructure, including the ability to deliver the most basic health, education, and other social services, has completely collapsed. Most resources are directed to the war effort. Severe restrictions by the Taliban, including a restriction on women working outside the home, have added to the impact of poverty, particularly on the many households lacking able-bodied adult men. The Taliban now controls about 90 percent of Afghanistan's territory.

Over the last year, two key factors have deepened Afghanistan's humanitarian crisis. The Taliban made substantial new territorial gains in August and September 2000, including the September 6 capture of Taloqan, which had been a Northern Alliance stronghold as well as the provincial capital of Takhar. Afghanistan has also suffered the effects of a debilitating drought that followed two successive years of inadequate rainfall. These developments have led to major new population displacements.

**Numbers Affected**

Afghanistan's total population is estimated at nearly 26 million. Since September 2000, civil strife and drought have driven an estimated 170,000 new refugees into Pakistan. Recent drought and conflict-displaced internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Afghanistan number at least 500,000. Longer-term conflict-displaced estimates are as high as one million countrywide. Drought has affected at least 12 million Afghans. An estimated 2.6 million old caseload refugees remain outside Afghanistan's borders in Iran and Pakistan, according to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

**Current Situation**

*Drought*

As the epicenter of a regional drought affecting vast areas of Central and South Asia, Afghanistan has suffered tremendous losses to crops and livestock that have severely affected the estimated 85 percent of the population that directly depends on agriculture. Drought-related food price increases have severely affected urban dwellers as well. The western Afghan city of Herat has become a focal point for families in neighboring regions displaced by drought. Drought-displaced IDPs in Herat number some 140,000 as of April 27, mostly from Ghor and Badghis Provinces. Efforts by relief agencies to provide assistance in areas of origin initially reduced the rate of influx to Herat, but the displaced population has continued to grow and IDPs are currently arriving at a rate of up to 1,000 per day. Despite international assistance including airlifts of relief commodities by USAID/OFDA as well as the governments of Norway and Japan, the influx has continued to stretch available relief assistance. In particular, shelter and sanitation facilities are in short supply, according to the U.N. Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA). A recent U.N. World Food Program (WFP) assessment mission to Badghis found that many of the remaining families had exhausted food supplies and livestock, and lacked sufficient assets to remain in their homes. WFP has warned that the IDP population in Herat could reach 200,000 by June 2001. This figure is a 53 percent increase over the permanent population of the city and surrounding areas, estimated at 375,000.

The drought has also affected northeastern Afghanistan, where the situation has been aggravated by conflict and a Taliban-imposed food blockade (The Taliban lifted a five year food blockade of the Panjshir Valley in March, but the blockade of Badakshan Province remained in force). On March 18, an assessment team of U.N. and non-governmental organization (NGO) personnel traveled to Shar-e-Bozorg and Ragh Districts in Badakshan to investigate Northern Alliance claims of famine-related deaths. The two districts depend heavily on rain-fed cereal cultivation and were hard hit by the drought. The team found no starvation, but found that 70 percent of livestock have been lost, and that existing food stocks were dwindling. The team also found high levels of infant mortality related to measles and acute respiratory infection as well as varying levels of chronic malnutrition. During the winter, WFP and NGOs provided food assistance in areas where weather permitted; as a result, displacement from these areas has reportedly been relatively low. WFP is now re-commencing food distributions in areas that had been

inaccessible during the winter. UNOCHA reported that medical teams were sent to Shar-e-Bozorg and Ragh to respond to the measles outbreak.

Regardless of the weather outlook for 2001, severe repercussions from the drought will continue. WFP reported that a seed shortage combined with the displacement of thousands of farmers to urban areas would likely lead to severe crop shortfalls. Lighter-than-normal snowfall during the winter means that snowmelt that feeds rivers and irrigation channels will be lacking. Extensive livestock losses have severely curtailed coping and recovery options. WFP has predicted that food aid will be necessary through at least July 2002.

#### *U.S. Government Humanitarian Assessment*

A U.S. Government (USG) humanitarian assessment team traveled to Afghanistan from April 11 to April 19, 2001. The team, the first official U.S. visit to Afghanistan since 1998, consisted of a nutritionist/contingency planner and a water/sanitation specialist from USAID/OFDA, the Pakistan-based Refugee Coordinator from the Department of State's Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (State/PRM), and personnel from WFP. In the west, the team visited Herat Province, including Herat's largest IDP camp; and Farah Province, including areas close to Ghor. In the north, the team traveled to Mazar-e-Sharif, Balkh Province, from where they visited Samangan Province and Faryab Province. The team found that all villages visited had been devastated by drought, although the team was not able to travel to Afghanistan's worst hit areas in Ghor and Badghis due to security concerns. In Herat's IDP camps, shelter, water, sanitation, and health care are inadequate for the rapidly growing population.

#### *Conflict*

Milder-than-normal winter weather allowed the continuation of military activities through what has traditionally been a lull period. In early January 2001, the Taliban seized control of Yakawlang District in Bamiyan Province from the Hezb-e-Wahdat, a faction aligned with the Northern Alliance. The Hezb-e-Wahdat regained control of Yakawlang in February. There were also reports of fighting near Bamiyan City in February and March; Bamiyan City reportedly briefly fell to opposition forces in February before being recaptured by the Taliban.

In the northeast, a group of persons displaced by fighting and Taliban gains in September 2000 moved to islands on the Pyandj River along the Afghan-Tajik border. UNHCR assessed this population in February 2001. According to the report, the island IDP population, widely reported as an estimated 10,000 IDPs, consisted of an estimated 2,000 to 3,000 Northern Alliance fighters. Many of the other residents are families of combatants. The assessment also found that population numbers appeared overstated. Citing concerns about the inability to ensure that humanitarian aid did not reach combatants, UNHCR announced on March 13 that it had suspended assistance to the island population. The Taliban shelled the islands on several occasions in March and April.

#### *Refugees*

In September 2000, large numbers of new refugees displaced by conflict and drought began streaming across the Afghanistan-Pakistan border. In November 2000, the Government of Pakistan (GOP) announced that it would no longer accept new refugees, citing its inability to cope with the influx. Most of the new arrivals have gathered at a makeshift camp at Jalojai, near Peshawar, where the population is currently an estimated 70,000. UNHCR moved 50,000 refugees to New Shamshatoo, also near Peshawar, to relieve crowding. In order to discourage new arrivals and encourage the current population to return home, the GOP has refused to let international organizations provide more than a minimum of assistance. As a result, conditions at Jalojai have remained poor.

#### *U.N. Sanctions*

On December 19, in response to the Taliban's continued harboring of indicted terrorist Usama Bin Laden, the U.N. Security Council adopted a resolution imposing new sanctions against the Taliban. The sanctions, which reinforce earlier sanctions imposed in 1999, specifically exempt humanitarian activities, as well as religious *haji* travel. Some U.N. staff withdrew in anticipation of a possible backlash similar to the violent protests that occurred when the first round of sanctions was imposed; no violence occurred, however, and staff soon returned. A March 20 U.N. Security Council report found that the new sanctions had not adversely affected the humanitarian situation.

#### **U.S. Government Assistance FY 2001**

On September 22, 2000, Assistant Secretary Karl F. Inderfurth re-declared a complex humanitarian disaster in Afghanistan for FY 2001. In addition, U.S. Ambassador to Pakistan William B. Milam issued a disaster declaration for Afghan refugees in Pakistan on February 2, 2001. To date, FY 2001 USG humanitarian assistance provided by USAID/OFDA, USAID/Food for Peace (FFP), the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), the Department of State's Bureau for Population, Refugees, and Migration (State/PRM), the joint Department of State/Department of Defense Demining Program, and the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) totals \$78,480,417, including both assistance inside Afghanistan and to Afghan refugees in neighboring countries.

In western Afghanistan, USAID/OFDA provided 30,000 blankets from its stockpile to ICRC at a cost of \$250,841 including transport to assist drought-affected families in Ghor. USAID/OFDA also chartered two planes to airlift emergency relief commodities from USAID/OFDA stockpiles into Herat on February 9 and February 16. The relief commodities for Afghanistan included 610 tents, 17,500 blankets, 4,800 five-gallon water jugs, four metric tons of high-protein biscuits, and three modified World Health Organization kits, each with sufficient supplies to treat 1,000 people for one month. The total cost of the airlift to Herat was \$650,850 including transport.

In northern Afghanistan, USAID/OFDA provided Save the Children/US (SCF/US) with \$1.5 million for drought-related relief activities in a range of sectors, including health with a focus on maternal and child care; winterization for IDPs; and cash-for-work drought response activities including well and *karez* repair and digging; and wheat seed distribution. The SCF/US program benefits populations in Andkhoy in Faryab Province and Mazar-e-Sharif in Balkh Province, as well as IDPs in Kabul. USAID/OFDA provided Shelter Now International (SNI) with \$320,400 for food and nonfood assistance to support host families sheltering war-affected IDPs in the Rostaq area of Takhar. In addition, USAID/OFDA modified an FY 2000 Taloqan shelter grant to SNI to redirect \$77,000 in unspent funds to meet critical new relief needs in the northeast. USAID/OFDA also modified an FY 2000 heating and shelter grant to the Agency for Technical Cooperation and Development (ACTED) with \$100,000 in unspent funds to support food and nonfood distributions for IDPs in the Rostaq area. USAID/OFDA provided \$50,000 to ACTED via USAID/Almaty to provide shelter and nonfood assistance to IDPs. USAID/OFDA provided Mercy Corps International (MCI) with \$760,000 to assist 3,000 war-affected IDPs with nonfood relief commodities to meet basic heating, lighting, and cooking needs in Takhar and Badakshan.

In Kabul, USAID/OFDA is providing \$1,483,000 to Action Contre la Faim (ACF) for health, nutrition, water, and sanitation activities. Countrywide, USAID/OFDA provided UNOCHA with \$600,000, including \$200,000 to support the purchase of nonfood relief commodities for IDPs; \$300,000 to support WFP-managed food programs and implementing partners; and \$100,000 in support of continued air transport services for humanitarian goods and cargo in Afghanistan. In Peshawar, Pakistan, USAID/OFDA airlifted 500 tents, 5,000 blankets and 100 rolls of plastic sheeting from USAID/OFDA's stockpile for consignment to the International Rescue Committee (IRC), which transported the supplies from Peshawar to the Jalozai and Shamshatoo camps for Afghan refugees. USAID/OFDA also provided two health kits. The total cost of the airlift to Peshawar was \$239,000 including transport. USAID/OFDA provided \$50,000 to IRC via the U.S. Embassy in Islamabad to support relief efforts associated with the airlift.

Additional humanitarian assistance for FY 2001 is being provided by USAID/Food For Peace (FFP), which is providing 30,000 MT of P.L. 480 Title II wheat valued at \$12.1 million in support of WFP's Emergency Operation (EMOP) to meet the urgent food needs of drought-affected Afghans, in addition to 6,310 MT of complementary commodities valued at \$5 million. In addition, USAID/FFP is providing 17,280 MT of assorted food commodities in support of WFP's Protracted Relief and Recovery Operation (PRRO) for Afghanistan valued at \$3.7 million. USAID/FFP is also providing 3,500 MT of wheat and 500 MT of vegetable oil, at a combined value of \$1.9 million, to support WFP's EMOP to feed newly arrived Afghan refugees in Pakistan. USDA has pledged an additional 75,200 MT of 416 (b) wheat for WFP's EMOP, valued at \$32.8 million.

State/PRM is providing \$4.5 million in support of ICRC's South Asia activities, including support for victims of conflict in Afghanistan, and is providing UNHCR with \$5.2 million in support of South Asia programs, a portion of which goes to programs benefiting Afghans. Additionally, \$850,000 of State/PRM's \$4.5 million global contribution to UNHCR supports children's programs for Afghan refugees in Pakistan. The U.S. Humanitarian Demining Program (HDP) provided \$2.8 million for demining activities in Afghanistan during FY 2001. Of this, \$1.1 million supports HALO Trust, a British demining organization, and \$1.7 million in financial and in-kind contributions supports the Mine Action Program for Afghanistan. HDP also provided 83 trucks for demining, valued at \$3.3 million. The Centers for Disease Control is providing \$569,525 to UNICEF to support polio eradication.

USAID/BHR/OFDA .....	\$5,904,092
USAID/BHR/FFP .....	\$22,556,800
USDA .....	\$32,800,000
State/PRM .....	\$10,550,000
State/HDP .....	\$6,100,000
CDC .....	\$569,525
<b>Total USG Assistance FY 2001 (to date) .....</b>	<b>\$78,480,417</b>

NOTE: USAID/OFDA bulletins can be obtained from the USAID web site at [http://www.usaid.gov/hum\\_response/ofda/situation.html](http://www.usaid.gov/hum_response/ofda/situation.html)